



April 11, 2003

**SEVERE ACUTE RESPIRATORY SYNDROME (SARS)
INFECTION CONTROL RECOMMENDATIONS
EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS**

The following infection control recommendations have been developed to assist emergency departments to triage patients who may be ill with severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). These recommendations are consistent with the CDC *Triage of Patients Who May Have Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome: Interim Guidance for Screening in Ambulatory Care Settings*, March 25, 2003 (www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/triage_interim_guidance.htm).

Patient Triage

Post a sign outside the emergency department entrance informing patients of the need to take special precautions. As an example:

To all patients:

To prevent the transmission of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) to healthcare workers and other patients, please follow these instructions:

**If you have a fever and a new cough and/or difficulty breathing
PLEASE**

1. Place a surgical mask, located (location of mask instructions) over your nose and mouth before entering this health care facility.
1. Inform the assistant at the front desk of your symptoms.

THANK YOU FOR PROTECTING OUR PATIENTS AND HEALTHCARE WORKERS

- Healthcare workers who are the first points of contact should be trained to screen patients for SARS.
- If possible, triage patients as they enter the emergency department.
- To facilitate identification of patients who may have SARS, targeted screening questions concerning fever, respiratory symptoms, and recent travel should be performed as soon as possible after patient arrival.
- Healthcare workers working at the front desk should put on an N-95 respirator when exposed to a suspected case of SARS. If N-95 respirators are not available, the healthcare worker should put on a surgical mask.
- The patient should be instructed to wear a surgical mask over their nose and mouth at all times while in emergency department examination room and, if hospitalized, during transportation nursing unit.
- Patients with fever and respiratory symptoms should not remain in the waiting room but should be taken immediately to an airborne isolation or HEPA filtered examination room and the door should remain closed.



--- EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS, Page 2 of 2 ---

- To facilitate contact tracing of exposed employees, the local health department should be notified of all suspected cases of SARS.

Personal Protective Equipment

- Healthcare workers assigned to emergency departments should have immediate access to personal protective equipment including gowns, gloves, respirators, masks and eye protectors or face shields.
- Healthcare workers should wear disposable, long sleeve gowns when direct face to face contact with a SARS infected person is anticipated.
- Disposable, non-sterile gloves should be worn when contact with respiratory secretions, blood and other body fluids are anticipated. Gloves are **not** a substitute for hand washing. Gloves should be put on immediately before patient contact and removed when physical contact with the patient is no longer necessary. Gloves should be changed between each patient.
- Hands should be washed with soap (plain or antimicrobial) and water after contact with all patients and environmental surfaces close to the patient. If hands are not visibly soiled with respiratory secretions, blood or other body fluids, an alcohol-based hand hygiene product can be use. For maximum effectiveness follow the instructions on the product label.
- Healthcare workers should be instructed not to touch the mucous membranes of the nose, eye or mouth with unwashed hands.
- An N-95 respirator should be worn when entering the room of a suspected SARS patient. When N-95 respirators are not available, healthcare workers evaluating and caring for suspect SARS patients should wear a surgical mask.
- Eye protectors (eye shields or goggles) should be worn when in direct face to face contact with a coughing patient.

Patient Care Equipment

- Reusable examination equipment such as stethoscopes and blood pressure cuffs and should be disinfected with a properly diluted, FDA approved, germicidal solution after use on a SARS patient.
- Environmental surfaces should be disinfected with a properly diluted FDA-approved disinfectant after the patient leaves the examination room and before admitting another patient to that room.
- Disposable examination gowns and sheets should be placed in a plastic leak-proof bag and disposed of according to hospital policy.
- Reusable examination gowns, sheets and lab coats should be placed in leak-proof bags and laundered according to hospital policy.

Patient/Family Instructions

- Patient and family members should be informed about SARS and how it is transmitted. If the patient is discharged to home, instructions have been developed for caring for the patient in the home (See Home Settings Instructions).
- Family members should be instructed to seek medical evaluation if they develop a fever and a cough.